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BLACK LEGION THREATENS AGAIN

Detroit's Fascist Elements in a New Drive

DETROIT, March 14 (Special to The Hour) -- Throughout the city in the workers' residential end in the factory areas, fresh evidence is appearing of the stimulated energy of Detroit fascism. Stairways in the Packard plant have carried crude signs, warning: "Jews Keep Off These Stairs." In other auto plants, there are again appearing little stickers announcing that "Jews Teach Communism, Jews Destroy Christianity, Jews Control Money"; the sticker is an old one but it is present in new abundance. Union members are receiving threatening notes, and so are some individuals too openly sympathetic to unions. A Hamtramck shopkeeper who had been allowing union members to hold meetings in his store received the following note, crudely penciled but meaningful enough: "S -- J ----, One more meeting in this joint and out of business you go and you won't be on earth to know what business means ... Black Legion."

Echoes of the European War

Some of these subterranean portents are reverberations of the war in Europe; others of the war possibly hanging over the auto city itself. The remnants of the Black Legion (and they are far more extensive than most realize) are organizing in apparent preparation for "things to come." This terroristic band reaches into some of the "highest" places; it has done so since 1935; and this is one reason why there never has been and for some time probably won't be an adequate investigation and expose of this masked group, with murders in its record.

Closely associated with the Legion's work are certain members of the National Workers League of Detroit, a fascist organization with Nazi connections, exposed by The Hour in June, 1939. It is true that the National Workers League, whose fiercest opponents were incidentally the workers themselves, has lost a great deal of its original verve and efficacy. Behind this fact there is a story. Various union members, figuring that this anti-democratic, anti-union outfit could be most strategically fought from within, decided to get into the League itself. In this they succeeded. Moreover, several of them worked themselves into such prominent positions that they have been able to cripple the League

apparatus severely and, at the same time, help expose the League's machinations. But the "best" of its forces have recognized the decline of the National Workers League; and they have moved into closer collaboration with the Black Legion remnants and the revived Ku Klux Klan (see The Hour for September 9, 1939).

There are other civic elements with which these League forces openly express their sympathies. Their praise of Reverend Frank J. Norris (who shot and killed D. E. Chipps in 1927, for which act he repented and a Texas jury acquitted him), of Gerald L. K. Smith, of Father Charles Coughlin is a compliment for which these gentlemen cannot of course be held responsible but is a compliment which they have no doubt earned.

Claim "Official Cooperation"

In its own far-reaching way the war in Europe is affecting the conduct of the Detroit fascists. The placing of war orders with various of the automobile plants and the consequent drive by the FBI and by the auto companies themselves against the aliens working in these plants have made the Industrial Legion, the KKK, the National Workers League and their allies feel that their proclaimed program of "Protecting the Jobs, Happiness and Welfare of the American Gentile" is growing in popularity. In their meetings they now say they have really been too squeamish in their anti-alien efforts, and that since -- according to them -- they now have what amounts to "official cooperation" and "protection" they might as well go the whole hog. And along with their anti-alien work, why not increase their activities toward "legally reducing the Jewish influence in American public life"? The Detroit fascists may be distorting the facts to their own advantage, but there can be no denying that they have a new and dangerous weapon in their hands and are obviously well pleased with its cutting edge.

An increase rather than a let-up in such activity is to be expected. Detroit's own war is brewing. United Automobile Workers have announced their campaign, starting in the immediate future, to organize the Ford Motor Company. Ford has clearly indicated his intention not to be organized by the UAW. In the battle that is about to ensue, it is apparent that the Black Legionaires, the Ku Kluxers and their cohorts will play an important role. They are against unionization of any sort and they will not stand idly by while such a scrap takes place. They want to be and they will be in the fray. Already they are making preparations.

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PELLEY FIGHTS EXTRADITION TO NORTH CAROLINA

Claiming that in case of his return to North Carolina he would suffer "violent physical abuse," William D. Pelley, head of the fascist Silver Shirts, now stopping in Washington, D. C., obtained through his attorney a writ of habeas corpus, a hearing on which is set for March 20.

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TRIAL OF 17 CHRISTIAN FRONTISTS SET FOR APRIL 3

Healy's Plan of Defense -- Coughlinites Dismayed by Lack of Catholic Support

Wednesday, April 3, is set as the opening day for the trial of seventeen Christian Frontists on charges of plotting to overthrow the United States Government. The case will be heard by Judge Marcus B. Campbell in Brooklyn, New York. Originally the trial was set for a date in March, but the first delay, of one week, was won by Leo Healy, lawyer for the defense, on the grounds that he was busy this month defending Ernest Walter Kehler who was accused of murdering the Nazi, Walter Engleberg, of the German Consulate in New York. Other delays were granted for other reasons.

It is interesting to note the emphasis placed by Leo Healy on the fact that he is defending not only the seventeen Christian Frontists but also a man accused of murdering a Nazi. The emphasis is held by some observers to be Healy's attempt to disassociate in the public mind the Frontists from the Nazis. Early this week, while defending Engleberg's murderer, Healy even tried to hint of his own alleged anti-Nazi feelings by making statements about "Hitler's bloody purges." The lawyer has also divulged one of the lines of defense he intends to pursue during the Frontists' trial: at a recent meeting of the Christian Front in Brooklyn he declared that the seventeen men had done nothing to break the law, and read aloud from the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution to the effect that "the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

Disheartened by Weak Support

Those few Catholic priests, followers of Father Coughlin and friends of the Christian Front, who have associated themselves with the defense of the seventeen men, are worried and displeased by the refusal of many other prominent Catholic churchmen and laymen to aid in the defense. Speaking at a recent Front meeting in Brooklyn, the Rev. Edward F. Brophy of Precious Blood Church in Queens said: "It is sad and humiliating to behold so many of our leading men deserting the Christian Front." Observers have commented on the fact that Brooklyn counts within its boundaries more than one million Catholics, yet the largest rally of the Christian Front in recent times managed to attract but 7,000 members and sympathizers and only three priests.

What they lack in numbers of adherents, the Coughlinites try to make up by the numbers of small organizations constantly formed or revived to aid in the defense of the Frontists. Some activity in behalf of the defendants is being carried on by the Queens County Committee Against Un-American Activities, also by Flying Squads on Americanism, as well as by the Christian Civil Liberties Committee. The last-named organization arranged for March 14 in Queens a special rally of protest "against the increasing manifestations of anti-Christian prejudice in New York City." Among the speakers it named Father Brophy, Father

Jerome Holland, and Father Joseph Diesz. Lay orators included William Ryan, head of the Flying Squads on Americanism and chairman of the Speakers' Club of the Xavier School of Social Science, and James O'Sullivan, an instructor at the St. Francis Preparatory School.

Curious Move of the League to Combat Anti-Semitism

An offer of aid came from a rather unexpected quarter when the so-called American League to Combat Anti-Semitism, with its main office in New York, decided to help in the Frontists' defense on the grounds that "it is high time for an organization or individual to volunteer a friendly gesture for harmony with his adversaries." When progressive groups and individuals criticized this curious move as either the height of naivete or a mere attempt at publicity, Selig Margolies, describing himself as executive director of the League, announced that "the League has consulted its lawyers for the purpose of commencing libel suits for libelous statements made against its honesty, character and purposes by certain organizations and papers of Jewish faith."

Nor did the unusual action of Mr. Margolies and his League fare well in the camp to which it was addressed. On March 1, his League sent a wire to Leo Healy informing the Christian Front of the League's eagerness to help defend the seventeen Frontists. The telegram stated: "Margolies will visit meeting Prospect Hall tonight, wishes to make short statement for boys in person from platform." When Healy read this message at the Front meeting of that evening, the audience laughed and applauded in a mocking spirit. Healy announced that the offer was appreciated by the Christian Front but that "Mr. Margolies would not be asked to speak because there might be some misunderstanding."

All But One Are Out on Bail

On March 9 one more Frontist of the group awaiting trial was released on bail when a casualty company furnished \$1,500 for Claus Gunther Ernecke, 36 years old, of Brooklyn. Thus, of the seventeen defendants, all but one are out on bail. The only one remaining in jail is William Gerald Bishop, 39, of Manhattan, stated to be either a German or a Swiss and known for his numerous Nazi connections (see The Hour for January 20, page 4).

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McWILLIAMS INVADERS HOME GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN FRONT

Taking advantage of the publicity drawn by the Christian Front Joe McWilliams and his Christian Mobilizers are now holding a series of meetings in Brooklyn, home territory of the Front. The Mobilizers' meetings are held in a Lenihan Avenue restaurant located in Ridgewood, a former stronghold of Fritz Kuhn's Bund. "Handsome Joe" spoke on February 22 and March 7 to audiences of about 100 people each. McWilliams' main theme was to decry the inequities of the Treaty of Versailles, but his harangues, to the predominantly German-American listeners, aroused only the mildest response.

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Through the Hourglass

MICHAEL SAYERS

HITLER'S TEACHER AND POOR RELATION

Two weeks ago this column reported that Italy was about to become "the key nation." Since then, Italy has been the scene of intense diplomatic activity, beginning with the arrival of Messrs. Welles and Taylor, and rapid-ly followed by the "coal crisis," the British trade conversations, and the sudden visit of Joachim von Ribbentrop and Dr. Carl Clodius with his flock of "economic experts." What does it all mean? What is the role of Italy in the present war?

It is important to remember that, in spite of Hitler's "achievements," the land of the Duce remains the classic example of the Fascist mode of existence. Organized crime and social decay are apparent at every turn. A savage economic and agrarian crisis grips the country. Prices soar and wages catastrophically collapse, in spite of all frantic attempts to "peg" them at "just" levels. Unemployment is rampant in spite of the forced labor and the swollen army. A brutal and degenerate bureaucracy preys on the bankrupt populace. The entire fake facade of "economic autarchy" crumbles and reveals the stark ruins of a nation. Desperate measures to stave off collapse take the form of wild demagoguery, lying, terror, prostitution of the country's resources to foreign powers. Thousands of starved Italian peasants are forcibly uprooted from their native land and "exported" to Nazi Germany as coolie labor on the Nazi farms. Thirty thousand are promised to the Nazis this year. And that first and last resource of social decadence, Jew-baiting, is revived. Beginning with this month, Jews are barred from the professions. No Jew may be a physician, surgeon, pharmacist, veterinary, lawyer, engineer, architect, chemist, agricultural or industrial expert.

Mussolini rode high on the original Nazi-Fascist tidal wave. In alliance with Nazi Germany, and faced with a capitulatory and paralyzed Britain, Fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia, Spain, Albania. After Munich, the cry of "Tunis! Corsica! Nice! Savoy!" resounded in Rome. Il Duce demanded Jibuti, a "share" in the Suez Canal, "domination" of the Mediterranean. There was a vast amount of bellicose commotion and bragging in general. Then, in September, world politics made a sudden and startling turnabout... and a strange quiet fell on Rome. The Mussolini-Ciano clique with their "interests" generously involved in both German and British financial and industrial concerns became abruptly "neutral."

Italy has always been a poor nation, lacking all essential raw materials. She must import tin, nickel, rubber, iron ore, oil, copper and coal. She cannot even supply herself sufficiently with wheat and olive oil, and must import great quantities of these commodities also. She must "export in order to live," yet, in order to export, she must import these raw materials, and for this purpose she needs cash, an item Italy has always sadly lacked. Hence Mussolini's "adventures" in Ethiopia, Spain, Albania. As in the case of Japan, poverty begets brigandage.

The present European conflict exposes all the weaknesses of Italy. The fact that Italian labor is still predominantly agricultural means that any protracted war would necessarily disorganize agriculture, and have devastating effects on the nation's food supplies and economic base. Italy is not fitted for modern war. Italy has been moulded by Fascism to be the instrument of greater powers. The "high aim" of Fascist diplomacy is "to be on the winning side." Whether as greatest of the "neutrals" or least of the belligerents, Italy has become "the key nation" merely as a center of international intrigue and focal point of all the contradictions that are tearing Europe today.

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